



STRATEGIC PLANNING WITHIN THE
DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE: A FOCUS ON
STRATEGIC HIERARCHICAL CONSISTENCY

THESIS

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AFIT/GIR/LAS/98S-3

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The views expressed in this thesis are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Department of Defense or the U.S. Government.

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Abstract

Mandated within the Department of Defense (DoD) by the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) of 1993, strategic planning is a systematic process organizations employ to envision the future and direct actions to desired outcomes within that future. Unfortunately, strong evidence suggests DoD and United States Air Force (USAF) planning efforts to date have met with limited success. This research explores one reason for this limited success. Towards this end, it defines a strategic hierarchical consistency construct and proposes a scale to measure one component, the alignment of mission, vision, and goal statements among a hierarchy of organizational plans. It then employs this construct and scale to investigate the alignment of missions, visions, and goals among the hierarchy of plans within a DoD/USAF chain of command.

The results of an exploratory, qualitative document analysis revealed only partial alignment of these missions, visions, and goals. Consequently, this research concludes that refinements to programs, policies, and/or strategic planning methodologies that place greater emphasis on establishing and maintaining strategic hierarchical consistency may provide a means to enhance the success of DoD and USAF planning efforts.

STRATEGIC PLANNING WITHIN THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE: A FOCUS ON STRATEGIC HIERARCHICAL CONSISTENCY

I. Introduction

Chapter Overview

Strategic planning is a systematic process organizations employ to envision the future and direct actions to desired outcomes within that future. In the private sector, where it has been widely accepted as a management tool for increasing organizational effectiveness and efficiency, organizations have practiced strategic planning since the late 1950s (Streib & Poister, 1990:1). Conversely, the public sector was considerably slower in its adoption of strategic planning. Here, widespread use did not emerge until the mid-1980s (Berry & Wechsler, 1995:160). In the Federal Government, this trend culminated in the 3 August 1993 enactment of the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) of 1993, which mandates strategic planning for all Federal agencies with few exceptions (US Congress, 1993). Under the GPRA legislation, each affected agency, including the Department of Defense (DoD), was required to submit an initial strategic plan by 30 September 1997.

Although the DoD was conducting strategic planning prior to GPRA requirements (GAO, 1997:3), strong evidence suggests that DoD and thus United States Air Force (USAF) strategic planning efforts to date have met with only limited success (Skrodzki, 1995: 70; GAO, 1997; US Senate, 1993:14). This limited success poses a management problem for both DoD and USAF managers; i.e. how do we enhance the success of DoD

and USAF strategic planning efforts. This research will strive to explore one possible reason for this limited success. Toward this end, it defines strategic hierarchical consistency and investigates the presence of one component concept, the hierarchical alignment of missions, visions, and goals, within a DoD/USAF chain of command. The results will determine the need for program, policy, and/or methodology refinements that emphasize establishing and maintaining strategic hierarchical consistency. This chapter lays the foundation for this exploration by defining strategic hierarchical consistency and narrowing the broad management problem above to one specific research question.

Strategic Hierarchical Consistency

Strategic planning is, in practice, an organization-wide process (Berry & Wechsler, 1995:163-4; Blackerby, 1994b:23; Wall & Wall, 1995:10), whereby the various units within the organization develop strategic plans that support the overall, organizational strategic plan (Berry & Wechsler, 1995:166). Accordingly, much of the strategic planning literature explicitly cites the establishment of a common organizational purpose and direction as one of the primary goals and benefits of strategic planning (e.g. Bates & Eldredge, 1980:166; Berry & Wechsler, 1995:164; Blackerby, 1994a:20; Cathcart, 1997:412; Goodstein, Nolan, & Pfeiffer, 1993:6; Mintzberg, 1994: 16; Nutt & Backoff, 1992: 58-61; Wall & Wall, 1995:8).

If each unit of each echelon within the structure of a large, hierarchical organization conducts relatively independent strategic planning efforts, however, explicit attention may be required to establish and maintain this common organizational purpose and direction throughout the resulting hierarchy of strategic plans. Consequently, better coordination of overall organizational planning might be achieved if subordinate level

strategic planning is accomplished with explicit attention to coordination with the overall organizational hierarchy of missions, visions, and goals.

If this common organizational purpose and direction exists within the scenario above, we would expect to observe, one, an alignment of visions, missions, and goals among the hierarchy of plans and, two, the appropriate coverage of all goals addressed in parent plans. More specifically, the missions, visions, and goals, of subordinate units within a given chain of command should be aligned with those of parent units. As for the second concept, appropriate coverage, all aspects of a parent unit's mission, vision, and goals should be addressed in the subordinate units' strategic plans, unless the parent unit itself is solely responsible for implementing that particular aspect of the plan. In the latter case, the parent unit would adequately cover that aspect of its strategic plan within its own strategic and performance plans. I will refer to these concepts as strategic hierarchical consistency.

Problem Statement

To meet the objectives and requirements set forth in the GPRA (US Congress, 1993:Sections 2-3), DoD and USAF managers must find ways to enhance the success of their strategic planning efforts. The exploration of strategic hierarchical consistency may provide one avenue for improvement. Given the size of the DoD and the USAF, it would be unreasonable to expect that one level of strategic planning supported by increasingly complex performance plans (synonymous with action or tactical plans) would adequately address the planning needs of each unit within the hierarchical chain of command. In practice, units at various levels within the chain of command conduct relatively independent strategic planning efforts (AFMC, 1998:1; USAF, 1998f:1; ASC, 1998:1;

DoD, 1998a:1; SAMU, 1998:1; Undersecretary of Defense, 1998:1). Consequently, the establishment and maintenance of strategic hierarchical consistency within DoD and USAF strategic plans is a relevant issue.

Unfortunately, neither the GPRA nor the DoD/USAF Strategic Planning methodology, provided by Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Circular A-11 (OMB, 1998), adequately addresses strategic hierarchical consistency. As its name implies, the GPRA focuses on linkages between strategic planning and the achievement of planned, measurable outcomes, but offers no emphasis on strategic hierarchical consistency. OMB Circular No. A-11 continues this trend as a supplemental extension of the requirements set forth by the GPRA. While tying strategic planning to outcomes is essential to achieving enhanced organizational effectiveness and efficiency, it is also intuitively obvious that even the best results may be counterproductive unless they support the proper objectives. Thus, strategic hierarchical consistency must be prerequisite to the achievement of planned outcomes in a systematic and rational strategic planning methodology.

To the DoD's credit, however, it explicitly identified and addressed the issue of the hierarchical alignment of missions, visions, and goals within the Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR), DoD's strategic plan (DoD, 1998a:1), itself and in a memorandum to subordinate units. This memorandum stated that subordinate units were, "expected to develop a strategic and performance plan that demonstrates linkage to the QDR and compliance with GPRA and is consistent with the FY 1999 budget submission" (Undersecretary of Defense, 1998:1). Headquarters (HQ) USAF also stresses the hierarchical alignment of missions, visions, and goals within its strategic plan. Volume I

of the Air Force Strategic Plan (AFSP) states, “The goals contained in the Mission Performance Plan [Volume II] will serve as a beacon to which the MAJCOMs [Major Commands], FOAs [Field Operating Agencies, DRUs [Direct Reporting Units], and other subordinate units can align their strategic plans” (USAF, 1998f:1).

One might reasonably argue that such emphasis on strategic hierarchical consistency should ensure the overall consistency of missions, visions, and goals within the hierarchy of DoD/USAF plans. While a step in the right direction, however, this emphasis by no means guarantees strategic hierarchical consistency in practice. Further investigation is necessary to verify proper enactment of this guidance.

Many existing strategic planning methodologies and evaluations of planning efforts may have overlooked the concept of strategic hierarchical consistency because they tend to assume the formulation or focus on the evaluation of only one level of strategic planning rather than the entire hierarchy of an organization’s plans (Blackerby, 1994a; Bryson, 1988; GAO, 1997; Koteen, 1991; Mason & Mitroff, 1981; Mintzburg, 1994; Nutt & Backoff, 1992; Skrodzki, 1995; US Senate, 1993). This study investigates the presence or absence of strategic hierarchical consistency within a DoD/USAF chain of command by exploring the alignment of unit missions, visions, and goals. Do the strategic plans of units within a given DoD/USAF chain of command evidence an alignment of missions, visions, and goals? The answer to this research question will determine the need for program, policy, or methodology refinements that may enhance the success of DoD and USAF strategic planning efforts through a greater emphasis on establishing and maintaining strategic hierarchical consistency.

II. Literature Review

Chapter Overview

This chapter reviews strategic planning literature and research of relevance to the research question: Do the strategic plans of units within a given DoD/USAF chain of command evidence an alignment of missions, visions, and goals? It begins with a discussion of missions, visions, and goals within the literature, as well as within DoD and USAF planning. The topic of discussion then turns towards strategic consistency, a parent concept of strategic hierarchical consistency.

Mission, Vision, and Goal Statements

Although a variety of strategic planning models exist, with various practitioners using different vocabularies, many of these models are conceptually quite similar. For example models typically include the development of an organizational mission, vision, and goals (Blackerby, 1994a:17). Since this research seeks to determine the alignment between the missions, visions, and goals of units within a selected DoD/USAF chain of command, it is important we clearly define mission, vision, and goal statements before proceeding any further. This section will also provide a look at some justifications for developing these statements as a part of strategic planning, since these justifications tend to implicitly reinforce the importance of strategic hierarchical consistency within the hierarchy of plans.

Mission Statements. The literature evidenced a general agreement that a mission statement is a declaration of the organization's overall purpose or justification of its existence. It defines *what* the organization does, i.e. its business, functions, and

operations (Anthony, 1985: 75; Blackerby, 1994a:18; David, 1997:78; Goodstein, Nolan, & Pfeiffer, 1993:169; Koteen, 1991:118). Notably, the mission statement may or may not address *how* the organization accomplishes its mission. Some methodologies use an explicit values statement to specify how the organization will accomplish its mission (Blackerby, 1994a:18; Goodstein, Nolan, & Pfeiffer, 1993:13-17; Koteen, 1991:124-5), others address this subject within the mission statement itself (David, 1997:88), and some simply do not address the subject (Anthony, 1985).

As for mission statements within DoD and USAF strategic planning, the GPRA directs planners to develop a, "a comprehensive mission statement covering the major functions and operations of the agency" (US Congress, 1993:Section 3). OMB Circular A-11 expands upon this requirement with the following guidance:

The mission statement should be brief, defining the basic purpose of the agency, with particular focus on its core programs and activities. In addition, the mission statement may include a concise discussion of enabling or authorizing legislation, as well as identification of issues that Congress specifically charged the agency to address. (OMB, 1998:1)

Until recently, the USAF also offered further guidance in strategic planning as a part of the Quality Air Force (QAF) quality management program. Consistent with the strategic planning literature, Air Force Handbook (AFH) 90-502 *The Quality Approach, Third Edition* defined a mission statement as the declaration of the organization's reason for existence. Under this methodology, key elements of the mission statement included, "the organization's purpose, who it serves, how and why" (USAF, 1998e:22). Although the QAF program, and consequently this strategic planning guidance, was discontinued in late spring or early summer of this year, this guidance may have influenced the

development of the subject USAF strategic plans. As an AFH, however, compliance with this guidance was optional even when it was in force.

King and Cleland offer the following justifications for the careful development of a written mission statement, as excerpted from David (1997:80):

1. To ensure unanimity of purpose within the organization.
2. To provide a basis, or standard, for allocating organizational resources.
3. To establish a general tone or organizational climate.
4. To serve as a focal point for individuals to identify with the organization's purpose and direction; and deter those who cannot from participating further in the organization's activities.
5. To facilitate the translation of objectives into a work structure involving the assignment of tasks to responsible elements within the organization.
6. To specify organizational purposes and the translation of these purposes into objectives in such a way that cost, time, and performance parameters can be assessed and controlled. (King & Cleland, 1979:124)

Vision Statements. The vision statement is a declaration of what the organization wants to be (David, 1997:81; Goodstein, Nolan, & Pfeiffer, 1993:38; Koteen, 1991:59-62). It provides a statement of organizational direction. Although the literature that addresses vision statements as a part of the strategic planning appears consistent in this definition, some of the literature reviewed did not include this component within the strategic planning process (Anthony, 1985; Blackerby, 1994a). The GPRA and OMB Circular A-11 were among these (US Congress, 1993; OMB, 1998). AFH 90-502, *The Quality Approach*, included the development of a vision statement in its methodology; this definition was consistent with strategic planning literature (USAF, 1998e:24).

In a group of executives across nineteen diverse organizations, Tregoe, et al. observed the following seven justifications for developing vision statements, excerpted from (Goodstein, Nolan, & Pfeiffer, 1993:39):

1. A perceived need for a common vision and sense of teamwork;
2. An experienced desire to control the organization's destiny;
3. A wish to obtain more resources for the operation;
4. A realization that the organization's current operational success was no guarantee for the future;
5. The need to get out of trouble;
6. An opportunity to exploit a new opportunity or deal with a new threat; and
7. The need to pass the torch and carry it.

Goal Statements. In the context of strategic planning, goals, sometimes referred to as objectives, are the overall results or outcomes that the organization seeks to achieve (Anthony, 1985:79; David, 1997:10-11). The literature also defines numerous other characteristics of *good* goals, but the core definition above will suffice for this research. An evaluation of the effectiveness and efficiency of goal statements is beyond the scope of this study.

Within DoD and USAF strategic planning, the GPRA directs planners to develop, "general goals and objectives, including outcome-related goals and objectives, for the major functions and operations of the agency" (US Congress, 1993:Section 3). OMB Circular A-11 offers planners the following additional guidance:

- Strategic plans set out the long-term programmatic, policy, and management goals of the agency, outlining planned accomplishments and the schedule for their implementation. The general goals and objectives should elaborate how the agency is carrying out its mission and very often will be outcome-type goals.

- The general goals and objectives should be sufficiently precise to direct and guide agency staff toward actions that fulfill the mission of the agency.
- General goals should not go beyond an agency's span of influence.
- General goals and objectives should be stated in a manner that allows a future assessment to be made on whether the goals were or are being achieved.
- In defining general goals and objectives, agencies should avoid platitudes or rhetoric which is inherently unmeasurable, either directly or through the use of performance goals and indicators. (OMB, 1998:275)

AFH 90-502, *The Quality Approach*, offered USAF planners the following guidance:

Tie strategic goals to the vision and strategies for overcoming the critical issues. Develop goals and objectives to bridge the gap between current capability and the vision. The strategic goals and objectives form the basis for the action plans. Prioritize and communicate this information to collect and incorporate the feedback. The feedback helps determine if goals and objectives are feasible and helps gain support and commitment from unit personnel. (USAF, 1998e:25)

According to Fred R. David, goal statements, "provide direction, aid in evaluation, create synergy, reveal priorities, allow coordination, and provide a basis for effective planning, organizing, motivating, and controlling activities" (David, 1997:10).

Strategic Consistency

Given that the establishment of a common organizational purpose and direction constitutes one of the primary goals and benefits of strategic planning, it is intuitively obvious that consistency, in general, would be a desirable trait within and amongst organizational plans. It should come as no surprise, then, that the importance of

consistency has been recognized in the strategic planning literature for quite some time (Anthony, 1985; Goodstein, Nolan, and Pfeiffer, 1993, Rumelt, 1980; Tilles, 1963).

In 1963, Seymour Tilles devised six criteria by which corporate strategies might be evaluated. The presence of internal consistency was the first of these criteria:

Internal consistency refers to the cumulative impact of individual policies on corporate goals. In a well worked-out strategy, each policy fits into an integrated pattern. It should be judged not only in terms of itself, but also in terms of how it relates to other policies which the company has established and to the goals it is pursuing. (Tilles, 1963:114)

Subsequently, Richard Rumelt devised another scheme for strategy evaluation. Here, consistency was the first of four criteria that might be used to evaluate business strategy. Specifically, this research maintained that strategy must avoid mutually inconsistent goals and policies. In this article, Rumelt implicitly notes the role consistency plays in establishing a common organizational purpose and direction:

Inconsistency in strategy is not simply a flaw in logic. A key function of strategy is to provide coherence to organizational action. A clear and explicit concept of strategy can foster a climate of tacit coordination that is more efficient than most administrative mechanisms. (Rumelt, 1980:57)

The strategic planning methodologies presented in *Applied Strategic Planning* (Goodstein, Nolan, & Pfeiffer, 1993:185-187) and *Practical Strategic Planning* (Anthony, 1985:78) both explicitly address mission formulation by organizational units. In both cases, these methodologies maintain that it is important to ensure the consistency of subordinate unit missions with that of the parent unit or organization. Neither methodology, however, delves into the reasons behind or benefits of this recommendation.

This employment of the concept of consistency within the strategic planning literature forms the basis for the strategic hierarchical consistency construct presented within this research. Strategic hierarchical consistency is merely a subset of the larger concept of strategic consistency. This research simply uses the strategic hierarchical consistency construct to describe the hierarchical alignment of missions, visions, and goals amongst the units of a large, hierarchical organization conducting relatively independent strategic planning efforts at various levels within the organizational chain of command.

III. Methodology

Chapter Overview

This descriptive, applied (business) research employs a qualitative document analysis of strategic plans within a DoD/USAF chain of command to answer the following research question: Do the strategic plans within a DoD/USAF chain of command evidence an alignment of mission, vision, and goals? This chapter reviews general methodological issues pertaining to research purpose, applied research, and research design (Cooper & Emory, 1995) that led to the selection of the specific methodology employed in this study. The chapter then ends with a discussion of other methodology considerations peculiar to this study.

Research Purpose

Since the literature review revealed little coverage of strategic hierarchical consistency within the strategic planning literature, this study takes a descriptive approach in researching the construct; i.e. it is necessary to describe a condition before it can be explained, predicted, or controlled (Cooper & Emory, 1995:9-10). This research seeks to define and characterize strategic hierarchical consistency within the context of contemporary DoD and USAF strategic planning, answering the questions *what*, *whom*, *where*, and *when*. *What* is the hierarchical alignment of missions, visions, and goals within the subject chain of command. The units authoring the sampled plans will constitute both *whom* and *where*. The *when* is now. This research might also provide insight into *how* strategic hierarchical consistency is established or maintained in practice. The insights gained through studying the selected chain of command should

result in conclusions applicable to the larger context of DoD-wide and USAF-wide strategic planning.

Applied Nature of this Research

This study was undertaken to help DoD and USAF decision-makers solve a specific management problem. More specifically, it seeks to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the DoD and USAF strategic planning efforts by guiding future decisions pertaining to strategic planning programs, policy, and/or performance. Towards that end, this research defines the strategic hierarchical consistency construct and investigates the alignment of missions, visions, and goals between the strategic plans of a selected DoD/USAF chain of command. Therefore, it is most appropriately categorized as applied (business) research.

Research Design

Since the problem of interest is not well crystallized within the strategic planning literature, this research leans heavily towards the loose structure of an exploratory study rather than the rigidity of a more formal study. Again, it would be premature to assume the definition, character, or meaning of strategic hierarchical consistency within the DoD and USAF at this point. This research strives to define the nature of strategic hierarchical consistency, identifying topics for future formal research that might attempt to explain, predict, or control it. On the other hand, the applied nature of this study also dictates the need for enough structure to sufficiently address the research question. Hence, the design is not purely exploratory in nature.

The abstract nature of determining the hierarchical alignment of missions, visions, and goals lends itself to a case study design. This design choice allows the researcher the structural freedom to conduct a broader, qualitative, contextual analysis of a relatively small number of events or conditions (Cooper & Emory, 1995:116-117). The selection of this design characteristic should complement the descriptive and exploratory objectives of this research. Given the above structural characteristics of a case study, the number of strategic plans analyzed will be relatively small, including those of the following increasingly subordinate units within the DoD/USAF chain of command: DoD, Headquarters (HQ) USAF, Air Force Material Command (AFMC), Aeronautical Systems Center (ASC), and Systems Acquisition Mission Unit (SAMU).

This research will be conducted under field conditions. Although this design offers the researcher less control over environmental variables, this research seeks to define, characterize, and document the nature of strategic hierarchical consistency under reasonably *normal* conditions, hopefully approximating the viewpoint of DoD and USAF planners.

Data will be collected through monitoring rather than interrogative approaches. Individuals will be questioned only if clarifications about a given strategic plan are necessary. An interrogative approach would not be appropriate, since differences in the strategic planning savvy between individuals might lead to drastically different interpretations of even the same strategic plan. Collecting data *ex post facto* by simply observing the published plans, i.e. document analysis, should provide the most objective approach for analyzing the alignment of missions, visions, and goals between subject

units. It also characterizes a technique potentially used by subordinate units to aid in the development of their own strategic plans.

Other Considerations

As stated above, the strategic plans of the particular chain of command, i.e. sample, selected for study included those of the following increasingly subordinate units: DoD, HQ USAF, AFMC, ASC, and SAMU. Since the *Research Design* Section provided only the justification for the size of this sample, this section will now address the selection of this particular chain of command. The selection of a sample containing AFMC's strategic plan was driven by the fact that this applied research effort is sponsored by AFMC. The DoD and HQ USAF plans were then selected to explore how AFMC plans align with the plans of higher echelons, and the ASC and SAMU were chosen to explore the alignment of the plans of lower echelons with that of AFMC. Since the hierarchical nature of the DoD's organizational structure dictates that each unit reports to one and only one higher authority, the selection of the DoD and HQ USAF plans to represent the plans of higher echelons was determined by the selection of AFMC. The ASC and SAMU plans, however, were selected from a wider range of alternatives. The ASC plan was selected because of previous research efforts on the strategic plans of this organization (Skrodzki, 1995). The SAMU plan was then subsequently selected as a matter of convenience. A conversation with ASC personnel revealed that the SAMU plan, as well as the ASC plan, were both available on those organizations' respective WWW sites.

Each of the strategic plans sampled, except for Volume II of the USAF Strategic plan, was found on the owning organization's WWW site. Volume II of the USAF strategic plan was obtained via electronic mail upon request from the HQ USAF Strategic Planning Directorate. Care was taken to ensure that each plan was explicitly labeled as the owning organization's strategic plan.

The determination of alignment between missions, visions, and goals will address the alignment of each sample unit's mission, vision, and goals, as stated within its strategic plan, with those of the next highest echelon. These particular components, i.e. mission, vision, and goals, were chosen because they constitute common elements within most strategic planning methodologies and efforts (Blackerby, 1994a:18). If a particular unit's plan does not contain mission, vision, and goal statements, however, these components will be derived from other documents if readily available, and so noted. In addition, it should not be necessary to analyze the alignment of each plan within the sample with every other plan. If strategic hierarchical consistency is present, then the proper alignment of a unit's plan with that of the next higher echelon should ensure strategic hierarchical consistency with even higher echelons provided the this alignment missions, visions, and goals exists between each unit and that of the next highest unit throughout the entire chain of command.

Given the overall methodology of this study, the determination of the degree of alignment between missions, vision, and goals will be rather subjective. This research utilizes the scale provided in Table 1 to bring some order to this subjective classification. This scale was created by the author for the purpose of this research and has not been independently validated. When employing this scale it is important to consider that

increasingly subordinate units within a chain of command perform increasingly specific functions and operations. Judgements pertaining to the alignment of missions, visions, and goals between echelons should be made with this consideration in mind. Even though we expect subordinate organizations missions, visions, and goals to align with those of the next highest echelon, the content, objectives, and emphasis of subordinate organizations' missions, visions, and goals should also be more specific, within the context of that alignment.

Table 1. Strategic Hierarchical Consistency Scale

<i>Rating</i>	<i>Description</i>
1. Weak	Very little if any consistency in the perceived content, objective, and emphasis of the mission, vision, or goal statement when compared with that of the next highest echelon.
2. Moderately Weak	Several significant departures combined with no or some insignificant departures in perceived content, objective, and emphasis of the mission, vision, or goal statement when compared with that of the next highest echelon.
3. Moderate	Few significant departures combined with no or some insignificant departures in perceived content, objective, and emphasis of the mission, vision, or goal statement when compared with that of the next highest echelon.
4. Moderately Strong	Several insignificant departures in perceived content, objective, and emphasis of the mission, vision, or goal statement when compared with that of the next highest echelon.
5. Strong	No or very few & insignificant departures in perceived content, objective, and emphasis of the mission, vision, or goal statement when compared with that of the next highest echelon.

We will now turn our attention towards some ground rules for interpretation of the results of this research. If the results indicate a strong alignment of missions, visions, and goals throughout the chain of command, this study will conclude the present process

is adequate to ensure this component of strategic hierarchical consistency and that we should look to other areas to enhance the success of DoD and USAF strategic planning efforts. If the missions, visions, and goals are aligned only partially, or not at all, this study will conclude that refinements to programs, policies, and/or strategic planning methodologies that place greater emphasis on establishing and maintaining strategic hierarchical consistency are necessary to enhance the success of DoD and USAF planning efforts.

IV. Results

Chapter Overview

This chapter presents the results of the document analysis conducted to answer the research question: Do the strategic plans within a DoD/USAF chain of command evidence an alignment of mission, vision, and goals? These findings are organized under the following headings: mission, vision, and goal statements, respectively. The final section of this chapter then concisely summarizes the results of the preceding sections using the strategic hierarchical consistency ratings developed in Chapter III.

Mission Statements

Department of Defense. Although the QDR, contained no DoD mission statement, the following mission statement was found on DefenseLINK, the DoD WWW site:

The mission of the Department of Defense is to provide the military forces needed to deter war and to protect the security of our country. (DoD, 1998b:1)

Headquarters United States Air Force. The USAF mission statement is specified in Air Force Policy Directive (AFPD) 90-1, Strategic Planning and Policy Formulation (USAF, 1998d:1). Upon completion of the AFSP, Volume II will reiterate this USAF mission statement. So far, no change in the mission statement, as specified in AFPD 90-1, is projected as a result of the development and release of the AFSP (AF/XPX, 1998:2). Both documents provide the following mission statement:

To Defend the United States through Control and Exploitation of Air and Space (AF/XPX, 1998:2; USAF, 1998d:1)

This mission statement demonstrates a moderately strong alignment with that of the DoD. As the air and space component of the DoD, the emphasis on “Control and Exploitation of Air and Space,” seems appropriate. There are, however, two departures of moderate significance from alignment with the DoD mission statement. First, the DoD mission explicitly emphasizes deterrence, followed by protection, in its mission. The USAF has chosen to emphasize only defense in its mission statement. Some may reasonably argue that both deterrence and protection fall under the umbrella of defense; nonetheless, the emphasis on deterrence is not commensurate with the DoD's mission statement. Second, the DoD statement utilizes the more passive terminology, “provide the military forces,” while the USAF takes a more active, tip-of-the-spear approach in wording its mission statement. This USAF's operational focus is interesting given the demarcation of responsibilities within the DoD. More specifically, individual military departments are responsible to *train, organize, and equip* military forces, while unified and combined commands *employ* those forces (USAF, 1998f:3-6) as represented in Figure 1 (USAF, 1998c:23):

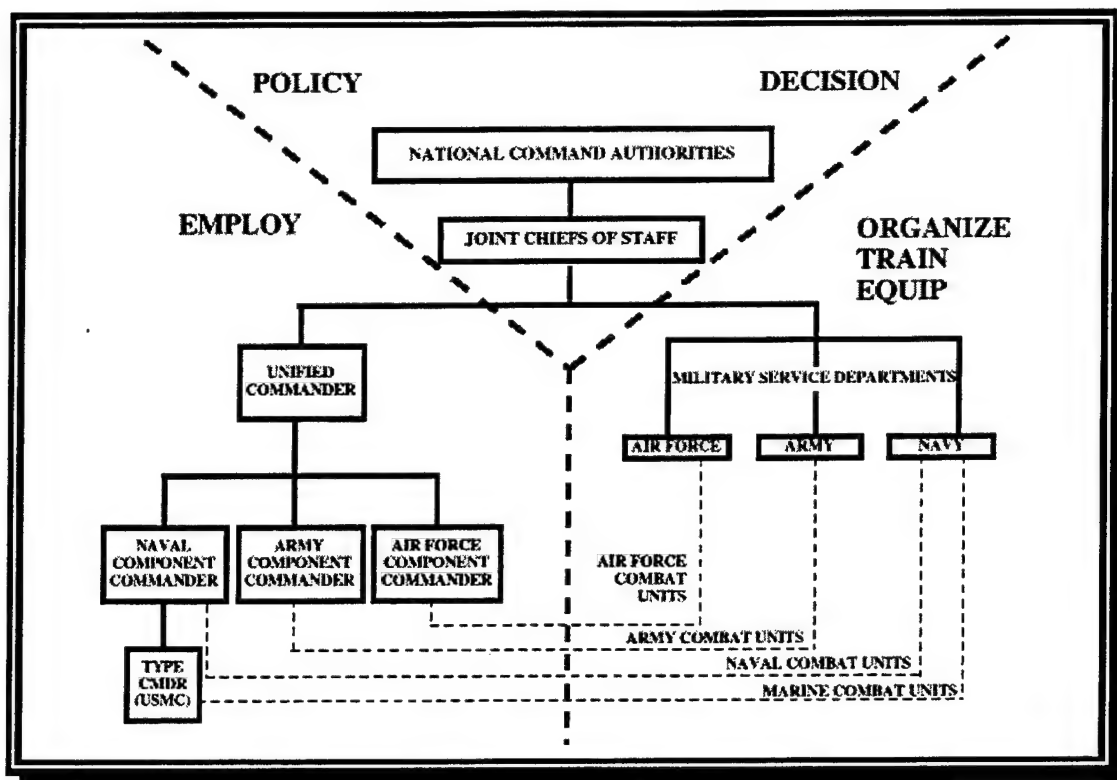


Figure 1. Command Relationships

Air Force Materiel Command. The draft AFMC plan provides the following mission statement:

Through integrated management of research, development, test, acquisition, and support, we advance and use technology to acquire and sustain superior systems and partnership with our customers and suppliers. We perform continuous product and process improvement throughout the life cycle. As an integral part of the Air Force war fighting team, we contribute to affordable combat superiority, readiness, and sustainability. (AFMC, 1998:1)

The AFMC mission statement demonstrates a moderately strong alignment with and support of the USAF mission statement. Since the AFMC mission statement demarcates AFMC's responsibilities within the Air Force, it is more specific in nature than the USAF mission statement, but this greater degree of specificity is not necessary for all components of the statement. For example, the words "combat superiority," "readiness,"

and “sustainability” emphasize key components, but not all, of “Defend the United States.” The AFMC statement also deviates from the USAF mission statement by emphasizing the advancement, acquisition, and use of systems in general rather than focusing on only systems relevant to the “control and exploitation of air and space.” Finally, the term “affordable” introduces an emphasis that was absent from both the DoD and USAF missions. This emphasis is present, however, in DoD Goals. Goal 6 of the DoD plan addresses the need for cost control.

Aeronautical Systems Center. The ASC plan strategic provides the following mission statement:

The ASC Team, together with our partners in government and industry, develops, acquires and sustains the world's best aerospace systems and supports our customers with superior products and services. (ASC, 1998:1)

The ASC mission statement demonstrates a strong alignment with and support of the AFMC mission statement. It addresses the development, acquisition, and sustainment of systems as specified within the AFMC mission statement. The use of “aerospace systems” further delineates ASC’s portion of the AFMC mission. Unfortunately, “supports our customers with superior products and services” lacks the specificity necessary to effectively etch out the ASC’s place in the grand scheme of mission statements. It would be helpful if “customers” and “services” were better defined. Given the first portion of this mission statement, “products” might be replaced with “aerospace systems.”

Systems Acquisition Mission Unit. The SAMU strategic plan provides the following mission statement:

Satisfy the Warfighters with Superior Systems--Faster, Cheaper, Better.
(SAMU, 1998:1)

The SAMU's mission statement provides a moderately strong alignment with and support for that of the ASC. It also attempts to better define customer entities. Unfortunately, it also addresses "systems" with less specificity and fails to define what its particular unit brings to the table in the realm of functions and operations as a support unit within ASC.

Vision Statements

Department of Defense. The QDR contained no explicit DoD vision statement, but frequently references the Joint Vision 2010, a DoD visionary document authored by the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS). Joint Vision 2010 provides the following vision statement:

America's Military Preparing for Tomorrow: Quality People, Trained,
Equipped and Ready for Joint Operations

- Persuasive in Peace
- Decisive in War
- Preeminent in any Form of Conflict (JCS, 1998:3)

Headquarters United States Air Force. The USAF vision statement is specified in Air Force Policy Directive (AFPD) 90-1, Strategic Planning and Policy Formulation (USAF, 1998d:1). *Global Engagement – a Vision for the 21st Century Air Force* constitutes the USAF's primary visionary document, which expands upon and explains this USAF-wide vision (USAF, 1998b). Upon completion of the AFSP, Volume II will reiterate this vision statement and refer readers seeking further details to *Global Engagement – a Vision for the 21st Century Air Force*. So far, no change in the vision

statement is projected as a result of the development and release of the AFSP (AF/XPX, 1998:2). All three documents provide the following vision statement:

Air Force People Building the World's Most Respected Air and Space Force...Global Power and Reach For America (AF/XPX, 1998:2; USAF,1998b:1; USAF, 1998d:1)

This vision statement demonstrates a moderately weak alignment with that of the DoD. First, it imparts proprietary approach. It focuses on the USAF, with no linkage to the DoD vision of training, equipping, and organizing quality personnel for Joint operations. In addition, "...Global Power and Reach for America" connotes a strong offense, commensurate with "Preeminent in any form of Conflict" but fails to emphasize deterrence. The USAF vision offers no analog or linkage to the statement, "Decisive in War." Finally, both "Building the World's Most Respected Air and Space Force" and "Preparing for Tomorrow" could conceivably imply modernization, a theme in both DoD and USAF visionary documents (JCS, 1998; USAF, 1998b). This last linkage, however, is only implicit and open to differing interpretations.

Air Force Materiel Command. The AFMC draft strategic plan does not provide a vision statement (AFMC, 1998:1). Thus, the alignment of AFMC and USAF vision statements is not an issue.

Aeronautical Systems Center. The ASC strategic plan provides the following vision statement:

Our vision is to be the aerospace research and acquisition center of choice
- The Birthplace, Home, and Future of Aerospace. (ASC, 1998:1)

This vision statement shows a moderately strong alignment with both the DoD and USAF visions. The phrase "aerospace research and acquisition center of choice" carries

connotations of an aerospace systems provider that is both responsible and responsive to its customers. The phrase "The Birthplace, Home, and Future of Aerospace" suggests a provider that is *innovative*, in addition to responsible and responsive. Although, the terms "research" and "acquisition" fails to fully encompass development and ignores the concept of sustainment.

Systems Acquisition Mission Unit. The SAMU has chosen to utilize the same vision statement as ASC (SAMU, 1998:1). Thus the alignment of ASC and SAMU vision statements is not an issue.

Goal Statements

Department of Defense. The QDR provided numerous goals and objectives and varying levels of organizational detail, including individual service goals and objectives, but never explicitly listed the DoD corporate goals it claimed would be extracted from the document. These DoD corporate goals, as extracted from the QDR, are available, however, in the DoD's Annual Report to the President and Congress:

Goal 1. Shape the international environment through DoD engagement programs and activities:

- Support friends and allies by sustaining and adapting security relationships.
- Enhance coalition capabilities.
- Promote regional stability.
- Prevent or reduce threats and conflict.

Goal 2. Shape the international environment and respond to the full spectrum of crises by providing appropriately sized, positioned, and mobile forces:

- Support U.S. regional security objectives.
- Deter hostile actors/activities in peacetime and in times of crisis.

- Conduct multiple, concurrent smaller-scale contingency operations, if required.
- Fight and win two nearly simultaneous major theater wars, if required.

Goal 3. Prepare now for an uncertain future by pursuing a focused modernization effort that maintains U.S. qualitative superiority in key warfighting capabilities.

Goal 4. Prepare now for an uncertain future by exploiting the Revolution in Military Affairs to transform U.S. forces for the future.

Goal 5. Maintain highly ready joint forces to perform the full spectrum of military activities:

- Maintain high personnel and unit readiness.
- Recruit and retain well-qualified military and civilian personnel.
- Provide equal opportunity and a high quality of life.
- Improve force management procedures throughout DoD.

Goal 6. Fundamentally reengineer the Department and achieve a 21st century infrastructure by reducing costs while maintaining required military capabilities across all DoD mission areas. (DoD, 1998c:Appendix J)

Headquarters United States Air Force. The USAF visionary document, *Global Engagement – a Vision for the 21st Century Air Force* states the goals necessary to achieve the USAF vision will be provided in the USAF Long-Range Plan (USAF, 1998b:4). This long-range plan, a precursor of the AFSP, enumerates sixteen goals. Some appear to be strategic and corporate in nature, but most are highly focused, more commensurate with performance rather than strategic planning goals (USAF, 1998a:1). The release of Volume II of the AFSP will establish the following three USAF, corporate, strategic planning goals:

Goal 1 - Quality People: Ensure a high quality force of dedicated professionals and provide an enhanced quality of life and strong sense of community.

Goal 2 - Operational Performance: Enable the joint force commanders to respond to a full spectrum of crises by providing appropriately sized, and ready forces to execute Air Force mission tasks.

Goal 3 - Modernization: Prepare for an uncertain future by pursuing a modernization program that implements the Revolution in Military Affairs by developing qualitatively superior warfighting capabilities. (AF/XPX, 1998:8)

According to the AFSP, "The Air Force Goals were chosen to provide direct support to the DoD goals as directed by the GPRA, since the Performance Plan will be the Air Force submission for GPRA." Volume II of the AFSP illustrates this in Figure 2 (AF/XPX, 1998:8), below:

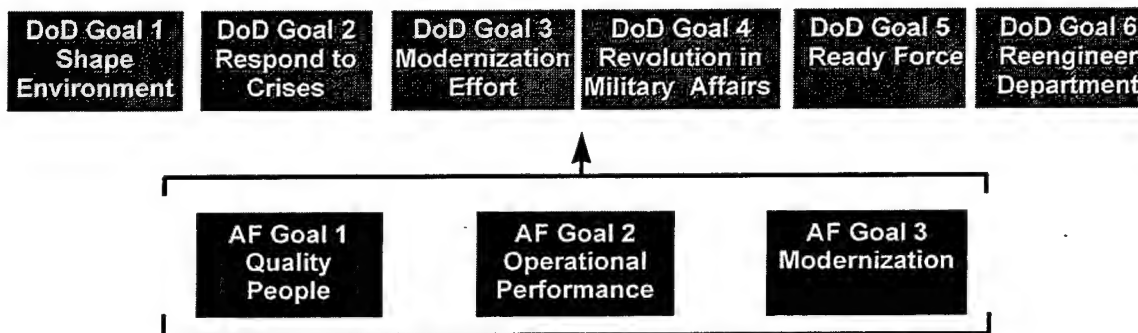


Figure 2. Alignment of DoD and USAF Goals

Upon closer inspection, the USAF corporate goals specified in Volume II of the AFSP show moderate alignment with and support of DoD corporate goals. USAF Goals 1 and 2, combined, align with and support the major aspects of DoD Goals 2 and 5, combined. USAF Goal 3 is aligned with and supportive of DoD Goals 3 and 4, combined. On the other hand, these USAF goals are also relatively broad and nonspecific in nature. They repeat much of the wording within corresponding DoD goals rather than providing goals that are aligned and supportive, but also worded to reflect the more specific nature of the

USAF mission. In addition, the AFSP does not appear to provide goals aligned with or supportive of DoD Goals 1 and 6.

Air Force Materiel Command. The AFMC draft strategic plan provides the following AFMC corporate goals:

- Satisfy Our Customers' Needs...In War and Peace
- Enable Our People to Excel
- Sustain Technological Superiority
- Enhance the Excellence of Our Business Practices
- Operate Quality Installations (AFMC, 1998:1)

These goals evidence a weak alignment with and support of USAF goals. This lack of alignment with and support of USAF goals is primarily a product of vague, nonspecific wording within the AFMC goals. Ideally, AFMC goals should explicitly address all applicable USAF goals, while adding specific, measurable, and externally oriented outcomes or directions (Blackerby, 1994a:18) related to AFMC specific functions and operations. Outside of the context of the AFMC strategic plan, readers would be hard pressed to identify these as AFMC goals, as opposed to the generic goals of any other generic organization. On the other hand, "Enable Our People to Excel" does demonstrate some alignment with and support of USAF Goal 1, while "Sustain Technological Superiority evidences some alignment with and support of USAF Goal 3.

Aeronautical Systems Center. The ASC strategic plan provides the following goals:

Our first goal is to: Maintain, Balance and Mature Our Core Competencies. ASC's core competencies are its People, Processes, Technologies, Infrastructure, and Capabilities. They have been framed into Center-level objectives to maintain a clear focus on these highly important elements of our organization. Each core competency makes a contribution to our customers and is critical to our success.

Our second goal is to: Achieve "Program Excellence": Excellence in All Our Capabilities. By improving our processes and then doing each task right the first time, we will pave the road to achieving an increased level of excellence.

Our third goal is to: Achieve a "World-Class Reputation." We must continue to maintain and improve our image with all of our customers. We must deliver world class, cost effective products and services. (ASC, 1998:1)

The goals within ASC's strategic plan evidence a strong degree of alignment with AFMC goals. This alignment, however, is facilitated by the fact that AFMC's goals are relatively vague and nonspecific. Unfortunately, the ASC's goals suffer from this same vagueness.

Systems Acquisition Mission Unit. The SAMU strategic plan provides the following goals:

Core Competence - Superior People, Processes, and Capabilities
Program Excellence - Meet or Exceed Commitments
World-Class Reputation - Superior Systems and Satisfied Customers
(SAMU, 1998:1)

These goals evidence a strong alignment with those of ASC. The SAMU's goals are essentially identical to ASC's goals with slightly different phrasing. Consequently, they suffer from the same vagueness as the strategic goals of both AFMC and the ASC.

Results in Brief

Using the scale developed in Chapter III, Figure 3 below summarizes the strategic hierarchical consistency ratings for each strategic plan as provided in the preceding sections of this chapter:

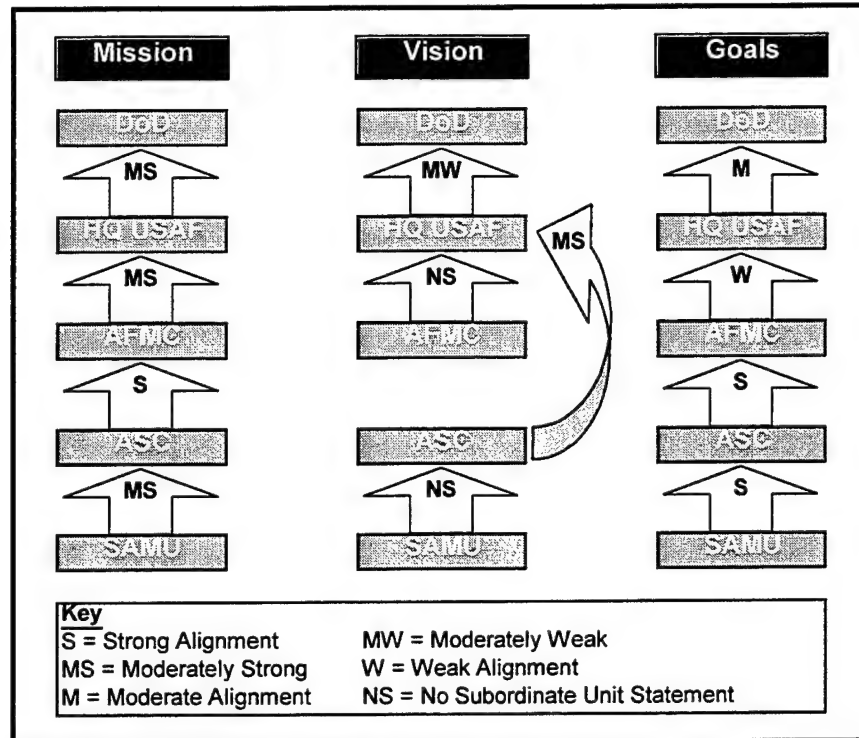


Figure 3. Strategic Hierarchical Consistency Ratings

Overall, Figure 3 evidences only a partial alignment of the missions, visions, and goals within the hierarchy of plans. Mission statements demonstrate the strongest degree of alignment throughout the chain of command, but there is considerable room for improvement in the strategic hierarchical consistency of both vision statements and goals.

V. Discussion

Chapter Overview

The previous chapter revealed only a partial alignment of missions, visions, and goals between the subject units. This chapter will now discuss these results. It will then conclude with a discussion of the limitations of this research and provide some suggestions for future research.

Findings

The results presented in the previous chapter revealed only a partial alignment of missions, visions, and goals between the hierarchy of strategic plans within the subject chain of command. The hierarchy of mission statements evidenced a moderately strong alignment throughout the hierarchy, while vision and goal statements demonstrated lesser degrees of alignment throughout the hierarchy. Consequently, this research concludes that refinements to programs, policies, and/or strategic planning methodologies that place greater emphasis on establishing and maintaining strategic hierarchical consistency may help to enhance the success of DoD and USAF planning efforts.

An additional observation that arose out of the results presented in the previous chapter underscores the importance of establishing and maintaining a strong degree of strategic consistency within the hierarchy of organizational strategic plans. The effects of deviations in strategic consistency appeared to be cumulative as one progressed through the hierarchy of organizational plans. For example, subordinate units aligning their goal statements with the deviant statements of the next higher echelon are likely to preserve that deviation. If more deviations are added by increasingly subordinate units, the effects

on strategic hierarchical consistency may become increasingly deleterious. This effect can be observed via the examination of the alignment of goals within the subject chain of command. The SAMU goals are strongly aligned with ASC goals, which are in turn strongly aligned with AFMC goals. However, the broad and nonspecific nature of AFMC goals demonstrates little alignment with the HQ USAF goals. Consequently, even though the plans of organizations subordinate to AFMC show a strong alignment of goals, the break in alignment between HQ USAF and AFMC causes ripples of deviation throughout the goals of the remainder of the chain of command.

Research Limitations

Since the selection of a particular research design, determination of sample size, selection of sample subjects, and numerous other choices all represent a balance of both strengths and weaknesses in their problem solving characteristics, this, like all research has its limitations. The primary limitations of this research effort include the subjectivity of the data interpretation, reliance on the perceptions of one researcher and method for that interpretation, and the relatively small sample size.

The exploratory nature and case study design of this research lends itself to a high degree of subjectivity in the interpretation of data. Determinations of the degree of strategic hierarchical consistency between any two mission, vision, or goal statements provided in the sampled units' strategic plans was a subjective interpretation on the part of the researcher. This research attempts to reduce that subjectivity to some extent through the development and use of the strategic hierarchical consistency scale provided in Chapter III. This scale merely brings some order to the researchers interpretations by

explicitly stating five degrees of strategic hierarchical consistency and the criterion used to classify these interpretations into one of those five degrees. This research also attempts to reduce the level of subjectivity in data interpretation by employing a document analysis as the means of exploration rather than relying upon the perceptions of multiple interviewees, survey results, or other interrogative methods. Nonetheless, subjectivity is a methodological weakness of this research that must be kept in mind when interpreting the conclusions presented here.

Reliance on the perceptions of one researcher and one methodological means of exploration, i.e. qualitative document analysis, represents another methodological limitation of this research. Researchers seeking to perform this type of research for other organizations might improve the reliability and validity of their results by, one, utilizing the perceptions of more than one person to classify degrees of strategic hierarchical consistency, and two, utilizing more than one methodological means of exploration. This first suggestion might be accomplished through the use of Delphi techniques, interviews, or surveys to allow expert classification of the degree of strategic hierarchical consistency among two mission, vision, or goal statements. The second suggestion might be implemented by employing researcher document analysis in conjunction with one of the techniques of the previous suggestion.

The sample size used in this study also introduces a limitation. Although a case study analysis of a relatively small sample allows for much greater breadth of analysis, suitable for exploratory research, it also introduces a much higher probability of obtaining an unrepresentative sample. This breadth of analysis was helpful in defining and describing the problem of strategic hierarchical consistency, but future studies on this

aspect of strategic hierarchical consistency might overcome this limitation by employing a larger sample size.

Follow-On Research

Replication of this research on the alignment of missions, visions, and goals of other organizations or chains of command may shed some light on the accuracy of the findings in this study. Such research might also reveal valuable insights into the strategic planning process of the selected organizations or chains of command, as well as potentially strengthening the construct of strategic hierarchical consistency. Since this research only addressed one component of the strategic hierarchical consistency construct, the hierarchical alignment of missions, visions, and goals, research pertaining to the other component concept might also be beneficial to strategic planning efforts. Researching the appropriate coverage of an organizational unit's mission, vision, and goals within the strategic plans of subordinate units might reveal desired or necessary functions or operations that are falling through the cracks in the strategic planning process. Finally, a refinement and validation of the strategic hierarchical consistency ratings developed and presented in Chapter III of this research might provide future researchers with an instrument for the measurement of degrees of strategic hierarchical consistency and practitioners with a useful metric for the performance of organization-wide strategic planning efforts.

Conclusion

This research explored one reason for the limited success of DoD and USAF strategic planning efforts to date. Towards this end, it defined strategic hierarchical

consistency and proposed a scale to measure one component of this construct, the alignment of mission, vision, and goal statements among a hierarchy of organizational plans within a DoD/USAF chain of command. The results of an exploratory, qualitative document analysis revealed only partial alignment of these missions, visions, and goals. Consequently, this research concluded that refinements to programs, policies, and/or strategic planning methodologies that place greater emphasis on establishing and maintaining strategic hierarchical consistency may provide a means to enhance the success of DoD and USAF planning efforts.

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Vita

First Lieutenant Thomas Eric Hartzell was born on 12 February 1972 in Shelby, North Carolina. He graduated from Northwestern High School in Rock Hill, South Carolina in 1989. In 1993, he graduated from the University of South Carolina with a Bachelor of Science in Biology, achieving a 3.3 academic average. He married the former Rebecca Marie Myres in 1995; they now have one daughter, Samantha Marie. Lieutenant Hartzell earned his commission from Officer Training School, Maxwell AFB, Alabama, on 11 August 1995, and was then assigned to the 27th Communications Squadron, Cannon Air Force Base, New Mexico. Here, he served as the Information Systems Flight Commander from August 1995 to July 1996 and the Support Flight Commander from September 1996 to March 1997. In between these assignments, he attended Basic Communications Officer Training at Keesler Air Force Base, graduating with a 96 percent academic average. Lieutenant Hartzell entered the Air Force Institute of Technology's Graduate School of Logistics and Acquisition Management in March 1997 as a master's degree candidate in the Information Resource Management program. Upon graduation, he will be assigned to the 366th Communications Squadron, Mountain Home Air Force Base, Idaho.

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